



ZOSTEROPS DORSALIS: Vig. & Horsf.

J. Gould and H. Richter del. et lith.

C. Hullmandel fecit.

# ZOSTEROPS DORSALIS, *Vig. and Horsf.*

## Grey-backed Zosterops.

*Certhia caerulea*, Lath. Ind. Orn. Supp., p. xxxviii.

*L'Heorotaire bleu*, Vieill. Ois. dor., tom. ii. p. 121. pl. 83?

*Bluish-breasted Creeper*, Shaw, Gen. Zool., vol. viii. p. 244.

*Cerulean Creeper*, Lath. Gen. Syn. Supp., vol. ii. p. 188.

*Cerulean Honey-eater*, Lath. Gen. Hist., vol. iv. p. 204.

*Sylvia lateralis*, Lath. Ind. Orn. Supp., p. lv.

*Rusty-side Warbler*, Lath. Gen. Syn. Supp., vol. ii. p. 250.—Shaw Gen. Zool., vol. x. p. 659.—Lath. Gen. Hist., vol. vii. p. 140.

*Certhia diluta*, Shaw, Gen. Zool., vol. viii. p. 244.

*Philedon caeruleus*, Cuv.

*Meliphaga caerulea*, Steph. Cont. of Shaw's Gen. Zool., vol. xiv. p. 264.

*Sylvia annulosa*, var.  $\beta$ , Swains. Zool. Ill. 1st Ser., pl. 16.

*Zosterops dorsalis*, Vig. and Horsf. in Linn. Trans., vol. xv. p. 235.

*White-eye*, Colonists of New South Wales.

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THIS bird is stationary in all parts of Van Diemen's Land, New South Wales and South Australia, and is more numerous than any other bird inhabiting those countries; where it is not only to be met with in the forests and thickets, but also in nearly every garden, by the proprietors of which it is regarded more as a pest than, as one would suppose, a welcome visitor; no one of the birds of the country effecting greater damage to the buds and fruits of every kind. It even builds its nest and rears its young in the shrubs and rose-trees bordering the walks. I observed several nests in such situations in the garden of the Government House at New Norfolk, Van Diemen's Land. Among the trees of the forest the beautiful tea-tree (*leptospermum*?) is the one to which at all times this species evinces a great partiality. Were it not for its destructive propensities, the Grey-backed Zosterops must from its familiar disposition and pretty lively song be a very general favourite.

Its flight is quick and darting, and when among the branches of the trees it is as active as most birds, prying and searching with the most scrutinizing care into the leaves and flowers for the insects, upon which it feeds. It is sometimes seen singly or in pairs, while at others it is to be observed in great numbers, on the same or neighbouring trees. The southern and eastern portions of Australia, and the islands adjacent, are its true habitat; and the two succeeding plates will show how beautifully it is represented by allied species in other parts of the country.

The breeding-season commences in September and continues to January. The nest is one of the neatest structures possible; it is of a round deep cup-shaped form, composed of fine grasses, moss and wool, and most carefully lined with fibrous roots and grasses. The eggs are usually three in number, of a beautiful uniform pale blue, eight and a half lines long by six lines broad.

The sexes present no difference of plumage.

On examining the "Collection of Australian Drawings," formerly belonging to the late A. B. Lambert, Esq., and now in the possession of the Earl of Derby, who kindly forwarded them to me for the purposes of the present work, I find that this species was long since described by Latham, under the names above quoted; in neither of his descriptions, however, does he mention the white ring around the eye, which forms so conspicuous a feature in the appearance of the bird, the want of which would have precluded the possibility of my believing them to be identical, had not the drawings named by Latham's own hand proved such to be the case: the species should therefore stand as *Zosterops caerulea*, although *Z. lateralis* would certainly be more appropriate; unfortunately this fact did not come to my knowledge until after the Plate had been named, and the requisite number of impressions struck off. Latham refers to the 83rd Plate of the "Oiseaux Dorées," as identical with his *caerulea*, but of this as I have indicated above I am doubtful.

Crown of the head, wings and tail olive; back dark grey, eyes surrounded by a zone of white feathers, bounded in front and below with black; throat, centre of the abdomen, and under tail-coverts greyish white with a slight tinge of olive; flanks light chestnut brown; upper mandible dark brown, under mandible lighter; irides and feet greyish brown.

In some specimens the throat and sides of the head are wax-yellow, and the flanks are only stained with chestnut brown.

The Plate represents the male, female and nest of the natural size, on a branch of the tea-tree of Van Diemen's Land.